



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

*** GUEST EDITORIAL ***

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Graduates prepared for the future

By State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster

As the 2008-09 school year draws to a close, our graduates are filled with hope and optimism. The joy of completing high school and the thrill of embarking on new challenges is part of this accomplishment. Yet, these young people move into a world rocked by economic uncertainty. They may ask: Will there be a job for me? Will my family and I be able to afford tuition for postsecondary studies? What does the future have in store?

Our high schools have done their best to prepare our graduates for the challenges they will face. Wisconsin has nation-leading graduation rates and achievement on the ACT college admissions test. More of our graduates have pursued rigorous coursework so they are ready to compete with students from around the world. And, not only are our young people smart, they are good. In every community, our students inspire us through their achievements in the arts, athletics, Career and Technical Student Organizations, and community service.

As our students graduate from Wisconsin high schools and prepare for the changes ahead, so too do I prepare for change as I leave elected office to become president of Nicolet Area Technical College. During my eight years as state superintendent of public instruction, it has been an honor and a privilege to work with thousands of students, teachers and parents, business leaders and policymakers. Together, we have accomplished so much.

There are now 34,000 children participating in 4-year-old kindergarten in 319 districts, an expansion of 90 percent in eight years. We have ensured smaller class sizes through the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program, gaining 60 percent more state aid, the first increase ever. We advanced professional development for teachers and other educational and

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professional staff through the Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative (PI 34), which includes new state grants for mentors. We focused attention on small rural districts, supporting them with transportation aid and new state sparsity aid funding.

There are many more accomplishments from the past eight years. They set a foundation for the challenges ahead. I know Wisconsin will continue its good work to develop world-class standards and next-generation assessments. Policymakers will collaborate on the reauthorization of federal education laws. Teachers, parents, and communities will continue the day-to-day fight to keep children and their education first. We all know that education is the foundation of our democracy and our prosperity.

There is much ahead for Wisconsin and the class of 2009. Best wishes to our graduates. Best wishes for our future.

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Elizabeth Burmaster is the elected state superintendent of public instruction. She will become president of Nicolet Area Technical College in Rhinelander in July.

NOTES: A high-resolution photo of the state superintendent is available on the Department of Public Instruction “Media Contacts and Resources” webpage at <http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/vm-media.html>. This editorial is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpi2009_55.pdf.